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European Standards for Peer Supporter Workers

A Framework for Training Programs at EQF levels 4 and 5



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The European competence profile for peer supporters in mental health is currently developed as part of the Erasmus⁺ Strategic Partnerships project entitled "European Standards for Peer Supporters" by the project partnership consisting of the following partners:



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1. Introduction

This document marks a way station in the ongoing development project entitled European Standards for Peer Supporter Workers, registered as an Erasmus⁺ project, and partially funded in the framework of the Erasmus program. One long term principle underlying Erasmus⁺ is the wish to standardize education across the EU to such a degree that it is possible for countries to directly assess and recognize qualifications and diplomas obtained in one country as valid in any other EU member state. In order to facilitate such standardization, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) was put in place.

A further expectation underneath Erasmus⁺ and the ESQ, going back to earlier WHO pronouncements on the right of full participation and citizenship, is that all education must ultimately be open access education, i.e., that access to courses must primarily be based on inner qualifications of the applicant, as in all regular education, and not be reserved for applicants because of accidental circumstances, or privileges. Hence the need for embedding training for peer support workers in the regular education systems of countries.

The EQF acts as reference for all educational standardization projects across the EU and forms the basis for the European accreditation of courses. Such accreditation presupposes sufficient comparability between courses within and between countries to allow a smooth exchange of students and recognition of ECTS credits obtained elsewhere, and facilitate the (temporary) transfer of staff, and the spread of specific or rare expertise. Circulation of students and staff is currently eligible for partial EU funding, and may well remain so in the foreseeable future. It is the EU's long term philosophy that this osmosis between countries and learning centers will help speed up the development of skills and know-how, particularly where such development is in its early stages and exchange is not well-established yet.

The current project aims to find Europe-wide agreement on study programs offered at the lower and mid-vocational level, and ultimately at the professional and academic level, in the field of professional peer support in mental health care. Aim of this particular paper is the description of training goals and requirements at EQF levels 4 and 5, based on principles and competence profiles laid down at an earlier stage. These together signify an intermediate level of formal education between basic (levels 1 through 3) and higher professional to academic training (levels 6 through 8) on the European scale. In terms of its aims and target group, the intermediate level corresponds to what is generally referred to as intermediate to higher vocational training.

The principles of experiential expertise have been described in various sources¹ before and will be briefly restated below. On the competence profiles for peer support workers a document was drafted and arrested by the project partners in September 2021, in which

¹ See for instance the EX-IN contributions to the project, or the generic module on experiential expertise developed in the Netherlands.

these profiles were described and differentiated.² Both principles and competence profiles lie at the heart of the framework for training at EQF levels 4 and 5.

More than at basic level, the development of a framework for formal education of peer support workers at the levels 4 and 5 is confronted with discrepancies between national educational systems and legislation, versus the principles of streamlining in course length and training content and the need to integrate education in the educational systems across EU countries, as set by the European Qualifications Framework. Some countries do not offer intermediate or higher vocational training in their regular systems, or only partly so; if not, such training is left to employers or other outside agencies. A further complication arises from the fact that, in some countries, existing courses aimed at training at the basic levels 1 through 3 and additional modules of further training have already become firmly positioned outside the national educational system, and now rely on decision making and funding via parallel channels, e.g., by labor market agencies, or mental health care providers, which in practice is often a formal obstacle to EU-wide recognition. Thirdly, the role played by peer support workers at intermediate level now active in different EU countries is not uniform, nor are the views on their role: their activities may for instance primarily be restricted to low-threshold crisis and recovery support, or their function may be carried out by staff originally trained in mental health care without personal internal experience of mental health disruption. This heterogeneous situation and the need for major and time consuming adaptations if consensus on anchoring training programs within the EQF framework is to be reached was adequately summed up by Karniej (2021).³

² *Differentiated competence profiles for the peer workers* (internal report).

³ Karniej, P. (2021). Using European Qualifications Framework level 5 to build a European competence model for peer support workers.

2. Cornerstones in peer support work

2.1 The essence of experiential expertise and its unique value

- Experiential expertise is an acquired inner quality.
- Experiential expertise arises from lived experience, further shaped by and framed through study and training.
- Experiential expertise plays a unique and valuable role in support and recovery processes in an increasing number of domains in healthcare and welfare, thanks to its irreplaceable perspective on these processes.
- The broadly schooled experiential expert has the overview of the total process between intervention and aftercare, including the primary stage of disruption and the obstacles on the road to renewed participation in life areas such as family relationships, intimate relationships, work, housing, and leisure activities, and may contribute to awareness raising and emancipation of the particular group they represent.

2.2 Experiential expertise in mental health care (MHC)

- Experiential experts have the competence to make space for the recovery of others based on their own recovery experience. More specifically, the experiential expert has developed the ability to:
 1. Use their own experiences with a disruptive disorder and overcoming that disorder (recovery) to support individual others in reciprocity in finding or making space for their personal recovery process. The input of the personal dimensions of recovery distinguishes an expert by experience from regular MHC disciplines.
 2. Use their own experiences of stigma and empowerment to promote a recovery-supportive (social) environment and recovery-supportive care. The reasoned input of this first-hand knowledge for the design of recovery-supportive care is distinct from other disciplines.
- Free space is the core value underlying the use of experiential expertise.
- Experiential experts have made it their profession to facilitate space for the unique process of recovery and the related domain of personal experience. They bring in experiences of finding space, including the experiences and insights of how care-derived, scientific and professional knowledge can support this process. In doing so, the expert by experience relies on two pillars:
 1. *Methodical self-help.* Through methodical self-help, finding space to investigate and support one's own well-being is facilitated; in addition, it can lead to a better understanding of the care demand.

2. *Emancipation.* Emancipation facilitates the creation of space for unconditional acceptance of oneself and others counteracting power inequality, exclusion and stigmatization in both care and society. This emancipation or equality can only come about when there is room and attention for a personal connection between service user and care workers.

2.3 Core tasks of the experiential expert

- The expert by experience focuses on three core tasks:
 1. *Support of individual recovery processes.* The experts by experience share their own experiences to inspire without giving advice. Methodical self-help offers helpful structures to do so.
 2. *Contribution to the design of recovery-supportive care.* The expert by experience shares personal experiences of and insights into the scope of the unique experiential process that is always more than any classification of it in terms of sickness or health, and on how care can continue to connect and respond to this, particularly when the process becomes uncomfortable. The expert adds experiential knowledge to the palette that includes professional and scientific knowledge. It is the responsibility of the entire organization to investigate how these three sources of knowledge can relate to each other.
 3. *Support to destigmatization and inclusion.* The expert by experience uses his or her own experiences and insights regarding exclusion and inclusion to address obstructive structures and prejudices at all levels in society and to contribute to breaking them down and thus making room for the inclusion of diversity.

3. Global goals of further training in experiential expertise and eligibility for such training

3.1 Global goals

- To offer an opportunity to develop and recognize experiential expertise in a scientific setting.
- To offer the opportunity to learn to contribute to the improvement of mental health services, with a focus on assistance in the health and recovery of service users.
- Enable the participation of users from different backgrounds to take part in a training programme that is based on learning from one's own and other users' experience.
- To create room for learning how the composite perspective of service users forms a unique and valuable contribution to mental health services.
- To prepare participants for a variety of skills through shared experiences and training, necessary for future roles as professional experiential experts: working with individuals, teamwork, organisational development, research, training or promoting mental health.
- To learn to promote the involvement of experiential experts in mental health, both in mental health services and in other areas of life, and to create opportunities to test and expand the importance of such involvement in practice.
- To promote the personal development of the participants on a positive, appreciative, anti-discriminatory, and person-centered basis.

3.2 Eligibility for further training

In order to be eligible for training to become an expert in peer support work, the following basic conditions must be met:

- Experience with severe disturbances and coping with them
- No acute crisis and no acute addiction
- Preliminary experience in self-help and triadogue
- Preliminary experience in assisting peers in the first stages of disturbance
- The ambition to develop into a professional on the basis of one's own experience and to undertake further study to follow up this ambition
- The ambition to explore the nature of disturbances and the obstacles on the road to full recovery
- The ambition to explore how experiential expertise may contribute to stabilization, recovery and reintegration
- Willingness to talk about oneself and one's experiences in a group
- Willingness to engage in group processes
- Availability of a social network providing guidance and support during the course
- Willingness to take care of oneself, resilience to pain and distress
- Willingness to take part in information events
- Willingness to take part in job or other interviews.

4. General descriptors for outcomes of training at EQF level 4 and 5

Within EQF, levels of competency are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and personal and professional competences. The so-called descriptors, i.e. the descriptive definitions for each level and category, are worded as outcomes of (formal) learning, as results of both training and personal development and signify competencies as much as qualifications.

Students who opt for further training beyond level 3, embark on a level of education that is essentially different in intellectual scope and demands. In very general terms, where up to level 3 the objective is to learn a hands-on trade and apply it in practice, with sufficient mastery of that trade to carry it out responsibly, levels 4 and 5 require the learner to increasingly understand the background and wider context of that trade and act with authority in instructing and supervising fellow-members of a team, apply creativity in finding solutions for unexpected problems, enlist the input of third parties when additional expertise is called for, and act as point of contact and consultation for all stakeholders relevant for service users. These competencies in turn require a degree of personal development for which any program at these two levels must provide the challenges.

EQF framework for levels 4 and 5

<i>Knowledge (Box 1)</i>	<i>Skills (Box 2)</i>	<i>Personal and professional competences (Box 3)</i>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin-bottom: 5px;"><i>Level 4</i></div> <p>Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study.</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin-bottom: 5px;"><i>Level 4</i></div> <p>A range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study.</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin-bottom: 5px;"><i>Level 4</i></div> <p>Exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change.</p> <p>Supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities.</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin-bottom: 5px;"><i>Level 5</i></div> <p>Comprehensive, specialized, factual and theoretical knowledge</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin-bottom: 5px;"><i>Level 5</i></div> <p>A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; width: fit-content; margin-bottom: 5px;"><i>Level 5</i></div> <p>Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities</p>

<p>within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge.</p>	<p>creative solutions to abstract problems.</p>	<p>where there is unpredictable change.</p> <p>Review and develop performance of self and others.</p>
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Typically, a diploma or set of qualifications at level 5 introduces students to a semi-professional status (associate degree level) within the primary process, both in terms of the practice itself and the insight in and monitoring of that practice, but also open the door to higher levels of education, at bachelor level and beyond.

5. Framework for the training of peer support workers at level 4

For the training of peer recovery and support workers, the above EQF outcome descriptors in three categories were taken as starting point for three learning dimensions. These are supplemented with an extra dimension on practical learning conditions and a paragraph on study load.

1. Core tasks of the peer recovery and support worker (EQF box 2, see above)
2. Knowledge of recovery and experiential expertise (EQF box 1, *ibid.*)
3. Personal and professional development (EQF box 3, *ibid.*)
4. Aspects of the learning environment critical to successful practical learning
5. Study load

A complete program at level 4 covers all these learning domains, but the framework leaves room for variations in focus, to do justice to areas of excellence in local learning centers. Students who embark on this training are assumed to have sufficient background at a basic level, either through earlier training, or otherwise.

Throughout the programs under this framework, all learning is systematically related to critical professional situations and departs from the professional competence profile arrested in September 2021⁴. This profile forms the foundation for all training and practical activities in peer support work and implies that any worker is fully familiar with themes like:

- Proximity versus distance
- Meaning in life versus meaninglessness
- The need for resilience in the face of distress and pain
- Seeking honesty between pride and shame
- Reconsidering cultural values

5.1 *Core tasks of the recovery and support worker at level 4*

The outcomes of learning at level 4 are expressed in terms of the core tasks that peer support workers are expected to successfully carry out. These are the skills elements of training, and will be backed up by personal development, knowledge, and sufficient quality practice during the training.

5.1.1 *Primary tasks*

With respect to the primary task of offering support to other service users peer support workers at level 4 are expected to be able to:

- Offer the hopeful perspective of recovery to other service users by using one's own experience with conviction

⁴ Cf. footnote 2.

- Provide a living example of resilience to adverse developments
- Take full responsibility for carrying out agreed support and coaching meetings for other service users, individually and in groups, using personal experience of the service users involved as guiding principle and creating significant added value in the recovery processes of each individual
- Point out and support recovery perspectives to both inpatients and outpatients, in relevant areas of life, such as coping with daily activities, social and intimate relationships, work, housing, and free time
- Be available for first aid situations of crisis or relapse
- Play a meaningful role in informing and counseling relatives and care providers, and in clarifying the position of service users, separately in the form of peer advocacy, or in triologue settings

5.1.2. Quality aspects of the primary tasks

With respect to the quality aspects of the primary task, peer support workers at level 4 are expected to be able to:

- Make suggestions for and contributions to (the improvement of) activities within recovery supportive care on the basis of a critical review of ongoing support programs and the feedback by service users
- Communicate suggestions and plans to colleagues and third parties
- Take part in and lead intervision activities with colleagues

5.1.3 Rehabilitation and emancipation

With respect to the recovery and emancipation of service users, peer support workers at level 4 are expected to be able to:

- Give presentations on methods and options of recovery and participation (or rehabilitation), network development, and outside reintegration support to service users and direct dependents
- Assist service users in their recovery and reintegration efforts
- Enlist the interest of outside parties relevant to service users by giving information, creating opportunities and countering stigma

5.2 Knowledge of recovery and experiential expertise

Carrying out the tasks under 4.1 presupposes that support workers must be able to abstract from their own experiences, based on a deeper knowledge and understanding of disruption and recovery processes, and a greater acquaintance with the varying experiences of service users. Theory oriented training must thus enable the peer support workers to:

- Familiarize themselves with the concepts of recovery, empowerment and stigma, knowledge of experience, expertise by experience and recovery-supportive care and the ability to apply these to one's own professional practice as well as within a team

- Acquire an overview of the history of the movement of service users and other networks of service users
- Define the differences between scientific knowledge, professional knowledge and experiential knowledge
- Explore developments in the field of recovery and peer support
- Become aware of normative and ethical dimensions within their own role and the diverse cultural norms in the larger environment

5.3 Personal and professional development

Carrying out the tasks under 4.1 presupposes that support workers must be challenged to develop the personal skills and insights necessary to become experts in their field at higher vocational level. These comprise:

- Active listening
- Reflecting on the significance of personal experience and the experience of others
- The ability to relate personal experience to the benefit of others
- Insight into the potentially positive or obstructive effect of personal experience
- Asking and giving feedback
- Elementary group dynamics
- Coaching and counseling skills
- Reflecting on one's professional acting and attitude and the ability to change these
- Monitoring the transition from working with direct personal experience to experiential expertise
- Exploring the roles peer support workers can play as professionals and in the organizational and social environment

5.4 Aspects of the learning environment critical to successful practical learning

Training at level 4 requires practice periods in a relevant environment, such as workplaces in mental healthcare institutions, forensic care, youth care, organizations of service users, social services and refugee centers. More recently, there is an increasing demand for experiential expertise in prisons, debt assistance, social services, and (semi)governmental institutions providing relevant services such as housing and leisure activities.

The work places where practical training is organized, must meet certain criteria, which concern:

- *the professional context*, which must include a job description, the presence of a working team of which, preferably, a peer support worker is a member; team members must have knowledge of recovery and the role of the peer support worker in this;

- *the set-up of the work*, which must involve room for orientation in and around the workplace, contacts with other peer support workers with whom joint activities can be performed, and the opportunity to learn the various roles of the peer support worker;
- *supervision*, involving a permanent practice supervisor of sufficiently advanced educational background, the possibility of intervision, sufficiently frequent supervision interviews, and the creation of a personal learning plan; the practice supervisor must have a signaling function towards the educational institution and see to it that the student is not charged with improper tasks (including regular care assistance tasks);
- *assessment of practical learning success*, in which the learning outcomes of practical learning are related to the competencies that were identified in the previous training dimensions. Assessment must take place by two trained supervisors, preferably one of whom is a peer support worker. The assessment can be supplemented with feedback from service users and other team members. Main themes in the assessment are working with service users in a recovery-oriented manner, working within and from care and welfare organizations and working towards one's own professionalization.

5.5 Study load

The number of hours to be spent on theoretical training and learning on the job amounts to a total of 80 days of 7 hours, spread out evenly across two calendar years. Theoretical training may take the form of distance learning or of mixed learning, comprising both face-to-face and distance learning.

The training includes 45 hours of personal supervision.

5.6 Attached is the detailed description of the expected learning outcomes from the peer supporters, adapted to level 4 of the European Qualification Framework



		Competences	4th level		
			Knowledge	Skills	Social competencies
PRIMARY TASKS OF THE PEER SUPPORT WORKER	PRIMARY TASKS	Offer the hopeful perspective of recovery to other service users by using one's own experience with conviction	1) Knows and understands the concept of health and the recovery process; 2) knows and understands the concept of own experience of a mental crisis in supporting the recovery process	1) Can analyse, select and combine information on the recovery process	1) Builds an atmosphere of trust and respect in the recovery process
		Provide a living example of resilience to adverse developments	1) Knows and understands the concept of mental resilience and its role in the process of coping with adverse developments	1) Can use the knowledge about mental resilience in the process of coping with adverse developments	1) Provides an example of resilience to adverse developments

		<p>Take full responsibility for carrying out agreed support and coaching meetings for other service users, individually and in groups, using personal experience of the service users involved as guiding principle and creating significant added value in the recovery processes of each individual</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands his/her own identity in the communities of people undergoing the recovery process, 2) Knows and distinguishes between the concepts of support and coaching</p>	<p>1) Can use coaching tools to create significant added value in the recovery process / enriching the recovery process with them / work aimed at recovery</p>	<p>1) Is willing to take responsibility for conducting support and coaching meetings for service users / healthcare recipients individually and in groups</p>
		<p>Point out and support recovery perspectives to both inpatients and outpatients, in relevant areas of life, such as coping with daily activities, social and intimate relationships, work, housing, and free time</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands the basic mechanisms and theories of social life and its development, 2) Knows and understands the basic principles of health care systems and the differences between hospital and outpatient services</p>	<p>1) Can apply theories concerning social life in practice, 2) Can indicate the prospects of recovery for hospitalized and outpatient patients</p>	<p>1) Indicates and supports the prospects of recovery for both hospitalized patients and outpatients, 2) Can support patients in coping with everyday activities</p>

QUALITY ASPECTS	Be available for first aid situations of crisis or relapse	1) Knows and understands the concept of mental crisis and the basic ways of coping with crisis situations	1) Can take appropriate actions in a crisis situation	1) Is available in an emergency or recurrence of the need for first aid
	Play a meaningful role in informing and counselling relatives and care providers, and in clarifying the position of service users, separately in the form of peer advocacy, or in triologue settings	1) Knows and understands the basic principles of informing and counselling the family and psychiatric health service providers	1) Can provide information and counselling to relatives and care providers and explain the situation of service users	1) Plays a significant role in informing and counselling relatives and care providers and explains the situation of service users
	Make suggestions for and contributions to (the improvement of) activities within recovery supportive care on the basis of a critical review of ongoing support programs and the feedback by service users	1) Knows, understands and interprets the existing support programs and health information for people using psychiatric services	1) Can make a critical analysis of existing support programs for people with mental disorders and choose the most appropriate forms of help and support for the specific needs of people using the support	1) Is willing to provide the most appropriate help and support to service users

REHABILITATION AND EMANCIPATION	Communicate suggestions and plans to colleagues and third parties	1) Knows and understands the essence of developing recovery plans	1) Can apply the developed recovery plan in practice	1) Is willing to implement the developed recovery plans
	Take part in and lead intervision activities with colleagues	1) Knows and understands the essence of teamwork and its development	1) Can work in a team	1) Is willing to work in a team, 2) Is open to new experiences in team work
	Give presentations on methods and options of recovery and participation (or rehabilitation), network development, and outside reintegration support to service users and direct dependents	1) Knows and understands the basic methods and tools used in the recovery process, 2) Knows and understands the functioning of the support network and outside reintegration	1) Can use the right tools in the recovery process, 2) Can function in support networks	1) Is willing to contribute to the work of social support networks
	Assist service users in their recovery and reintegration efforts	1) Knows and understands the concepts of reintegration and recovery	1) Can support service users in their efforts to reintegrate	1) Is willing to support service users in their recovery and social reintegration efforts

	<p>Enlist the interest of outside parties relevant to service users by giving information, creating opportunities and countering stigma</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands the structures of speech, interpersonal communication and the rules of building statements and the use of anti-discrimination language (inclusive language)</p>	<p>1) Can build and present moderately complex statements with the use of anti-stigmatization and anti-discrimination language</p>	<p>1) Shows an attitude free from stigmatization and discrimination, 2) Is willing to cooperate with various external stakeholders</p>
	<p>Familiarize themselves with the concepts of recovery, empowerment and stigma, knowledge of experience, expertise by experience and recovery-supportive care and the ability to apply these to one's own professional practice as well as within a team</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands the concepts of recovery, empowerment and stigmatization, experience and expertise through experience</p>	<p>1) Can apply in practice the knowledge about the process of recovery, empowerment and limiting stigmatisation and use experience in supportive care</p>	<p>1) Shows an understanding of the need for empowerment, limiting stigmatisation and using personal experience in supportive care</p>

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT RECOVERY AND EXPERTISE	Acquire an overview of the history of the movement of service users and other networks of service users	1) Knows and understands the principles of creating medical records, access to it and the rules of using it, 2) Knows and understands the principles of sharing medical records between different healthcare providers	1) Can use the available medical documentation for the purposes of the recovery process, 2) Can complete medical documentation in the provided scope of competences	1) Keeps information contained in medical records relating to service users confidential
	Define the differences between scientific knowledge, professional knowledge and experiential knowledge	1) Knows and understands the terms: scientific, professional and experimental knowledge	1) Can apply the concepts of scientific, professional and experimental knowledge in practice	1) Is willing to apply the acquired scientific, professional and experimental knowledge in the work

	Explore developments in the field of recovery and peer support	1) Knows and understands the latest knowledge in the field of the recovery process and peer support	1) Can use the available knowledge in practice in the field of the recovery process and peer support	1) Is willing to be explore the developments in the field of recovery and peer support
	Become aware of normative and ethical dimensions within their own role and the diverse cultural norms in the larger environment	1) Knows and understands the ethical principles, moral and cultural norms related to support in the recovery process	1) Applies in practice the ethical principles, moral and cultural norms related to support in the recovery process	1) Is aware of his/her own professional role and the resulting responsibility
PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Reflecting on the significance of personal experience and the experience of others	1) Knows and understands the importance of own experience and the experience of others	1) Can use own and other people's experience in the process of peer support and recovery	1) Is willing to use own experience and the experience of others in the recovery process
	The ability to relate personal experience to the benefit of others	1) Knows and understands ways of relating personal experiences to the benefit of others	1) Can use own personal experience to the benefit of others	1) Is willing to use own experiences to the benefit of others

	Insight into the potentially positive or obstructive effect of personal experience	1) Knows and understands own limitations resulting from personal experience	1) Can use the potentially positive effect of own experience	1) Is willing to use own experiences for others
	Asking and giving feedback	1) Knows and understands the essence of building complex statements, asking questions and providing feedback	1) Can ask questions, build complex statements and provide feedback	1) Shows an attitude of openness in asking questions, building statements and providing feedback
	Elementary group dynamics	1) Knows and understands the concept of group dynamics	1) Can use the concept of group dynamics in practice	1) Is willing to put into practice the knowledge gained in the field of group dynamics
	Coaching and counselling skills	1) Knows and understands the concepts of coaching and counselling competences	1) Can use in practice his/her own coaching and counselling competences	1) Is willing to use in practice specific coaching and counselling tools, adjusted to the needs
	Reflecting on one's professional acting and attitude and the ability to change these	1) Understands the need to reflect on own professional activity and the need for constant improvement	1) Can undertake activities aimed at own improvement	1) Is willing to reflect on own professional behaviour and attitude

	Monitoring the transition from working with direct personal experience to experiential expertise	1) Knows and understands the differences between personal experience and the concept of experimental expertise	1) Can use own personal experience in the transition from work with direct personal experience to experimental expertise	1) Monitors the transition from working with direct personal experience to being an expert through experience
	Exploring the roles peer support workers can play as professionals and in the organizational and social environment	1) Knows and understands the different roles of a peer support worker	1) Can perform the tasks of a peer support worker	1) Is willing to undertake the actions and tasks assigned to a peer support worker
EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT ASPECTS KEY TO THE SUCCESSFUL PRACTICAL EDUCATION	The professional context, which must include a job description, the presence of a working team of which, preferably, a peer support worker is a member; team members must have knowledge of recovery and the role of the peer support worker in this;	1) Knows and understands his/her place in the therapeutic team, 2) Knows and understands the principles of cooperation with medical professionals	1) Knows how to work in a therapeutic team, 2) Can cooperate with medical professionals	1) Is willing to have a partnership dialogue and cooperation, and to be subordinate in various hierarchical structures

	<p>The set-up of the work, which must involve room for orientation in and around the workplace, contacts with other peer support workers with whom joint activities can be performed, and the opportunity to learn the various roles of the peer support worker</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands the rules of work organization, 2) Knows and understands the need to cooperate with other peer support workers, 3) Knows and understands the various roles of a peer support worker</p>	<p>1) Can organize own work, 2) Can cooperate with other support workers, 3) Can assume various roles of a peer support worker</p>	<p>1) Is willing to assume various employee roles, 2) Organizes own work</p>
	<p>Supervision, involving a permanent practice supervisor of sufficiently advanced educational background, the possibility of intervision, sufficiently frequent supervision interviews, and the creation of a personal learning plan; the practice supervisor must have a signaling function towards the educational institution and see to it that the student is not charged with improper tasks (including regular care assistance tasks);</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands the concepts of supervision and intervention and the role of these processes in the work of a peer support worker</p>	<p>1) Participates in supervisions and intervisions organized for peer support workers</p>	<p>1) Is willing to cooperate within the supervision and intervision processes</p>

	<p>Assessment of practical learning success, in which the learning outcomes of practical learning are related to the competencies that were identified in the previous training dimensions. Assessment must take place by two trained supervisors, preferably one of whom is a peer support worker. The assessment can be supplemented with feedback from service users and other team members. Main themes in the assessment are working with service users in a recovery-oriented manner, working within and from care and welfare organizations and working towards one's own professionalization.</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands the concept of practical learning success in connection with competences, 2) Knows and understands the need for constant self-improvement and own professionalization in the work of a peer support worker</p>	<p>1) Can use in practice the possessed competences in order to achieve the success of practical learning</p>	<p>1) Uses the possessed competences in practice, 2) Evaluates the success of practical learning</p>
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6. Framework for the training of peer support workers at level 5

The training of peer support workers at level 5 builds upon the successful completion of level 4 training. The framework below only lists the additional components above level 4, presupposing level 4 has been mastered. The same framework structure applies:

1. Core tasks of the peer recovery and support worker (EQF box 2)
2. Knowledge of recovery and experiential expertise (EQF box 1)
3. Personal and professional development (EQF box 3)
4. Aspects of the learning environment critical to successful practical learning
5. Study load

Levels 5 is differentiated from level 4 by the fact that

- the knowledge and understanding to be acquired go intellectually deeper and are more comprehensive
- the skills transcend the practical level; cognitive and self-motivated exploratory skills are demanded, and the problems to be resolved may be more abstract
- a helicopter view over the work of oneself and others is required
- contributions may be expected to new initiatives and developments in the field of peer support work and rehabilitation

For the completion of an educational program at this level a so-called associate degree is awarded, which is an internationally recognized diploma.

6.1 *Core tasks of the peer recovery and support worker*

6.1.1 *Primary tasks*

With respect to the primary task of offering support to other service users peer support workers at level 5 are expected to be able to:

- Concretize the visions of hope in connection with the needs and knowledge levels of service users
- Involve more (inspirational) resources in the actual circumstances of service users
- Relate the different methods of self-help to each other, assess the similarities and differences and provide counseling to individual service users on self-help
- Give and receive feedback in a wide context of relevant stakeholders and evaluate the relevance for users, support programs and rehabilitation options

6.1.2 Quality aspects of the primary tasks

With respect to the quality aspects of the primary task, peer support workers at level 5 are expected to be able to:

- Give advice on the use of experiential expertise on all organizational levels, specifying the advice per level or unit
- Involve the broader organizational and social context naming factors that promote or hinder recovery and to indicate the differences of opinion that exist in this context
- Analyse problems in the practice of recovery and experiential expertise in the organization on policy level, using one's own vision, and formulate recommendations for improvement

6.1.3 Rehabilitation and emancipation

With respect to the rehabilitation and emancipation of service users, peer support workers at level 5 are expected to be able to:

- Start initiatives of service users with respect to experiential expertise
- Contribute to the acquisition of commissions to improve expertise in recovery and the use of experiential sources
- Take initiatives in de-stigmatization
- Analyse the current position of peer recovery and support work in the narrow and broader context of rehabilitation, quartering, and de-stigmatization, and propose an agenda for improving social inclusion

6.2 Knowledge of recovery and experiential expertise

Carrying out the tasks under 5.1 presupposes that support workers must not only be able to abstract from their own experiences, and those of fellow service users, but also from the ruling views on rehabilitation or lack thereof within the social and political context. At this level, peer support workers must be able to:

- Apply relevant concepts of recovery, empowerment and stigma, knowledge of experience and recovery supportive care within the entire organization or another relevant professional network
- Define potential roles of peer support workers in the (interest) networks of service users
- Express the distinctions between the different forms of knowledge outside the organization, using examples
- Analyse complicated social and organizational environments in order to determine the possible roles of the peer support worker in these environments
- Develop a learning objective in which the interaction on multiple organizational levels is elaborated
- Formulate the national interest in the field of recovery and experiential expertise for other domains
- Identify the various perspectives and contradictions in handling the ethical and normative aspects for professional practice

6.3 Personal and professional development

Carrying out the tasks under 5.1 presupposes that support workers must be challenged to develop the personal skills and insights necessary to become experts in their field at higher vocational level. These are the same as for level 4, but at a higher level of competence by training and practice. In addition, the following skills must be mastered:

- Giving presentations, addressing large audiences and third parties at an advanced social level
- Analytic and problem solving skills
- Self-motivated studying and exploratory skills
- Practical creativity and initiative taking

6.4 Aspects of the learning environment

The conditions for work or practice periods under level 5 largely overlap with those at level 4, but they also include:

- The possibility of direct interaction with the world outside the organization or workplace

6.5 Study Load

The number of hours to be spent on theoretical training and learning on the job amounts to a total of 80 days of 7 hours, spread out evenly across two calendar years. Theoretical training may take the form of distance learning or of mixed learning, comprising both face-to-face and distance learning.

The training includes 45 hours of personal supervision.

6.6 Attached is the detailed description of the expected learning outcomes from the peer supporters, adapted to level 5 of the European Qualification Framework



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		Competences	5th level		
			Knowledge	Skills	Social competencies
PRIMARY TASKS OF THE PEER SUPPORT WORKER	PRIMARY TASKS	Offer the hopeful perspective of recovery to other service users by using one's own experience with conviction	1) Knows and understands the concept of individual, population and public health as well as the recovery process, 2) Knows and understands, at an advanced level, the effects of actions related to the use of his/her own experience in the recovery process	1) Can use the possessed knowledge about individual, population and public health	1) Builds an atmosphere of trust and respect in the recovery process and of full commitment to supporting the recovery process
		Provide a living example of resilience to adverse developments	1) Knows and understands the concept of mental resilience and knows the methods of increasing this resilience	1) Can use theoretical knowledge and tools to foster mental resilience	1) Shows an attitude of openness to the use of available tools to foster resilience to adverse developments

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		<p>Take full responsibility for carrying out agreed support and coaching meetings for other service users, individually and in groups, using personal experience of the service users involved as guiding principle and creating significant added value in the recovery processes of each individual</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands the principles and methods of organizing and carrying out support and coaching meetings for individual and group service users, 2) Knows and understands, at an advanced level, the dependencies and relationships between participants of support and coaching meetings</p>	<p>1) Can choose and use appropriate coaching tools in individual and team work</p>	<p>1) Is willing to take responsibility for the tools used during support and coaching meetings</p>
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		<p>Point out and support recovery perspectives to both inpatients and outpatients, in relevant areas of life, such as coping with daily activities, social and intimate relationships, work, housing, and free time</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands the phenomena and dependencies as well as methods and theories explaining the complex relationships in social life, 2) Knows and understands the principles of organization, management and financing of psychiatric health care at an advanced level</p>	<p>1) Can make the right selection of sources and information from them concerning social life, 2) Can indicate, at an advanced level, the prospects of recovery for hospitalized patients and outpatients</p>	<p>1) Is willing to fulfil social obligations related to the function of a peer support worker 2) Supports service recipients in an entrepreneurial way in fulfilling their social functions</p>
		<p>Be available for first aid situations of crisis or relapse</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands, at an advanced level, the rules of conduct and responsibility in a situation of mental crisis and providing psychiatric first aid</p>	<p>1) Can take appropriate and adequate actions in a crisis situation at an advanced degree</p>	<p>1) Is willing to take responsibility for actions taken in a crisis situation, using adequate tools</p>

	Play a meaningful role in informing and counselling relatives and care providers, and in clarifying the position of service users, separately in the form of peer advocacy, or in triologue settings	1) Knows and understands, at an advanced level, the rules of informing and counselling families and psychiatric health care providers, depending on the occurrence of various types of mental disorders and their severity	1) Can use in practice the principles of informing and counselling families and healthcare providers, depending on the occurrence of various types of mental disorders and the degree of their severity	1) Is willing to play an important role in informing and counselling relatives and healthcare providers adequately to various types of mental disorders and the degree of their severity
QUALITY ASPECTS	Make suggestions for and contributions to (the improvement of) activities within recovery supportive care on the basis of a critical review of ongoing support programs and the feedback by service users	1) Knows and understands the principles, methods and theories of developing support programs	1) Independently or in a team, is able to develop a support program for service users	1) Is willing to provide the most appropriate help and support to service users and can prepare a support program individually or in a team
	Communicate suggestions and plans to colleagues and third parties	1) Knows and understands the essence of devolving recovery plans	1) Can create and put recovery plans into practice	1) Is willing to develop and implement recovery plans in practice

	Take part in and lead intervision activities with colleagues	1) Knows and understands the principles and essence of teamwork at an advanced level, incl. taking into account cultural differences	1) Can build relationships in the employee team, 2) Can moderate the work of the team	1) Is willing to work in an interdisciplinary team that is culturally diverse, 2) Is willing to lead an interdisciplinary team
REHABILITATION AND EMANCIPATION	Give presentations on methods and options of recovery and participation (or rehabilitation), network development, and outside reintegration support to service users and direct dependents	1) Knows and understands the methods and tools used in the recovery process at an advanced level, 2) Knows and understands the principles of building and functioning of a support network and outside reintegration	1) Can organize his/her individual and team work, 2) Can present and justify his/her own position	1) Is willing to work individually and in a team, also in the process of building a social support network
	Assist service users in their recovery and reintegration efforts	1) Knows, understands and explains the concept of social reintegration and recovery at an advanced level	1) Can communicate outward using the right terminology to support service users in their efforts to reintegrate into society	1) Is willing to communicate outward and initiate activities for social reintegration, fulfilling social obligations

	<p>Enlist the interest of outside parties relevant to service users by giving information, creating opportunities and countering stigma</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands the rules of taking actions to counteract stigmatisation and discrimination, 2) Knows and understands advanced structures of expression and inclusive language</p>	<p>1) Can build and present complex statements at an advanced level with the use of inclusive language, with the use of basic specialist vocabulary</p>	<p>1) Is willing to cooperate and initiate activities with various external stakeholders to counteract stigmatisation and discrimination</p>
	<p>Familiarize themselves with the concepts of recovery, empowerment and stigma, knowledge of experience, expertise by experience and recovery-supportive care and the ability to apply these to one's own professional practice as well as within a team</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands, at an advanced level, the concepts and essence of recovery, empowerment, stigmatization, experience and expertise through experience</p>	<p>1) Can apply in practice, at an advanced level, the knowledge about the process of recovery, empowerment and limiting stigmatisation and use experience in supportive care in individual and team work</p>	<p>1) Is willing to use knowledge and own experience in supportive care</p>

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT RECOVERY AND EXPERTISE	Acquire an overview of the history of the movement of service users and other networks of service users	1) Knows and understands the legal grounds for processing medical records at an advanced level, taking into account legal restrictions in this regard, 2) Knows and understands the principles of personal data protection, including in the context of electronic documentation	1) Can use medical documentation at an advanced level to create recovery plans and taking into account legal restrictions, 2) Can use IT systems processing personal data and search for necessary information in these systems	1) Is willing to process medical records in accordance with applicable law, 2) Is willing to operate systems processing personal data and monitor this processing as part of the supervised support network
	Define the differences between scientific knowledge, professional knowledge and experiential knowledge	1) Knows and understands at an advanced level the terms: professional, scientific and experimental knowledge	1) Knows how to apply at an advanced level the concepts of scientific, professional and experimental knowledge in practice	1) Recognizes the incompleteness and uncertainty of the possessed knowledge, is willing to supplement it

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Explore developments in the field of recovery and peer support	1) Knows and understands at an advanced level the latest trends, knowledge and good practices in the field of the recovery process and peer support	1) Can use at an advanced level the available knowledge in practice in the field of the recovery process and peer support	1) Is willing to use the available knowledge in practice in the field of the recovery process and peer support
	Become aware of normative and ethical dimensions within their own role and the diverse cultural norms in the larger environment	1) Knows and understands at an advanced level the ethical principles, moral and cultural norms related to support in the recovery process	1) Applies in practice at an advanced level ethical principles, moral and cultural norms related to support in the recovery process, 2) Can apply in practice the principles of professional ethics	1) Is willing to perform professional roles in a responsible manner, including observing professional ethics and social norms
	Reflecting on the significance of personal experience and the experience of others	1) Knows and understands at an advanced level the importance of own experience and the experience of others	1) Can recognize the level of competence based on own and other people's experience in order to provide peer support and the recovery process	1) Is willing to inspire other team members to use their own experience and that of others in the recovery process

	The ability to relate personal experience to the benefit of others	1) Knows and understands at an advanced level ways of relating personal experiences to the benefit of others	1) Can use own personal experience at an advanced level to the benefit of others by selecting and using appropriate methods and tools, including information and communication techniques	1) Is willing to inspire other people to use their own experience through the right selection of information and communication methods, tools and techniques
	Insight into the potentially positive or obstructive effect of personal experience	1) Knows and understands at an advanced level own limitations resulting from personal experience	1) Can distinguish between the potentially positive and obstructive effect of own experience in working for others	1) Is willing to distinguish between the potentially positive and obstructive effects of own experience in working for others
	Asking and giving feedback	1) Knows and understands advanced rules of building complex statements, asking questions and providing feedback depending on the information recipient	1) Can communicate with the environment using the appropriate terminology, receive and build complex statements using specialist terminology	1) Show an open attitude in communicating with the environment using appropriate terminology, 2) Is willing to receive and

				build complex statements using specialist terminology
Elementary group dynamics	1) Knows and understands at an advanced level the concept of group dynamics	1) Can use the possessed knowledge about concept of group dynamics in practice	1) Is willing to initiate changes in group dynamics	
Coaching and counselling skills	1) Knows and understands at an advanced level the concepts of coaching and counselling competences	1) Can identify the differences between known tools, techniques and models of coaching and counselling work and use appropriate tools and techniques in working for the benefit of others	1) Is willing to use appropriate coaching and counselling tools in own work and to inspire other team members to do so	
Reflecting on one's professional acting and attitude and the ability to change these	1) Understands at an advanced level the need to reflect on own professional activity and the need for constant improvement	1) Can assess own educational needs, use the available learning opportunities on his/her own	1) Is willing to assess own educational needs and make use of the available learning opportunities on his/her own	
Monitoring the transition from working with direct personal experience to experiential expertise	1) Knows and understands the complex relationships	1) Can use at an advanced level own	1) Can use at an advanced level own	

		between personal experience and the concept of experimental expertise, creating theoretical foundations and detailed issues	personal experience in the transition from work with direct personal experience to being an expert through experience	personal experience in the transition from work with direct personal experience to being an expert through experience
	Exploring the roles peer support workers can play as professionals and in the organizational and social environment	1) Knows and understands the basic economic, legal and other effects of various types of peer support activities	1) Is able to use the acquired knowledge by selecting the appropriate sources of information and tools in the work of a peer support worker	1) Is ready to use possessed knowledge and select the appropriate sources of information and tools in the work of a peer support worker
EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT ASPECTS KEY TO THE SUCCESSFUL PRACTICAL EDUCATION	The professional context, which must include a job description, the presence of a working team of which, preferably, a peer support worker is a member; team members must have knowledge of recovery and the role of the peer support worker in this;	1) Knows and understands at an advanced level the rules of working and cooperating in interdisciplinary teams	1) Can communicate and organize the work of an interdisciplinary team through the selection of appropriate methods and tools, including information and communication techniques (ICT)	1) Is willing to communicate and organize the work of an interdisciplinary team, selecting the appropriate methods and tools, including information and communication techniques (ICT)
	The set-up of the work, which must involve room for orientation in and around the workplace, contacts with other peer support workers with whom joint activities can be performed, and the opportunity to learn the various roles of the peer support worker	1) Knows and understands the economic and legal determinants of work, 2) Knows and understands the principles of organising individual and group work	1) Can manage own working time and lead teams	1) Is willing to take responsibility for own and team work and to build an appropriate work environment for an interdisciplinary team

	<p>Supervision, involving a permanent practice supervisor of sufficiently advanced educational background, the possibility of intervention, sufficiently frequent supervision interviews, and the creation of a personal learning plan; the practice supervisor must have a signaling function towards the educational institution and see to it that the student is not charged with improper tasks (including regular care assistance tasks);</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands at an advanced level the concepts of supervision and intervention and the role of these processes in the work of a peer support worker</p>	<p>1) Can communicate and actively participate in supervisions and interventions organized for peer support workers, 2) Can present own position on the actions taken for the benefit of other people</p>	<p>1) Is willing to communicate and actively participate in supervisions and interventions organized for peer support workers and people preparing to become a support worker</p>
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	<p>assessment of practical learning success, in which the learning outcomes of practical learning are related to the competencies that were identified in the previous training dimensions. Assessment must take place by two trained supervisors, preferably one of whom is a peer support worker. The assessment can be supplemented with feedback from service users and other team members. Main themes in the assessment are working with service users in a recovery-oriented manner, working within and from care and welfare organizations and working towards one's own professionalization.</p>	<p>1) Knows and understands the need to seek counselling, raise the level of knowledge and improve own competences, 2) Knows and understands the principles of intersectoral cooperation and creating a support network</p>	<p>1) Can analyse and assess own learning needs in order to plan own development and the development of others</p>	<p>1) Is willing to analyse and evaluate own learning needs in order to plan own development and the development of others</p>
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7. Future developments

Currently, first steps in policy development aimed at peer support work and the further professionalization of the deployment of experiential expertise are being taken. In the Netherlands, for instance, general guidelines for experts by experience and a professional register are foreseen for early 2022, after an inventory has been made of the current state of the field. These are expected to lead to the drafting of educational frameworks and curricula for the levels 6 and 7, at the higher end, and for the levels 2 and 3 at the lower end of the EQF scale. In this light, the current competence profile will be updated next year. Similar ambitions have been expressed in other EU countries.

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8. Relevant sources

Note 1:

EX-IN: Project papers describing current training modules and ambitions for further training. Internal documents.

Generic module on experiential expertise developed by a project group of the Trimbos institute and Phrenos knowledge center, the Netherlands, in collaboration with representatives in the field.

Note 2:

Differentiated competence profiles for the peer workers. Report by the present Erasmus⁺ project group, 2021. Internal document.

Note 3:

Karniej, P. (2021). Using European Qualifications Framework level 5 to build a European competence model for peer support workers. In: *European Standards for Peer Support Workers in Mental Health. Social, Organisational and Legal Determinants of the Profession of Peer Support Worker in Europe*. Warsaw, 2021, 87–98.